

This is a preview of "ISO 639-4:2010". [Click here to purchase the full version from the ANSI store.](#)

First edition  
2010-07-15

---

---

## Codes for the representation of names of languages —

Part 4:

### General principles of coding of the representation of names of languages and related entities, and application guidelines

*Codes pour la représentation des noms de langue —*

*Partie 4: Principes généraux pour le codage de la représentation des noms de langue et d'entités connexes, et lignes directrices pour la mise en œuvre*



Reference number  
ISO 639-4:2010(E)

© ISO 2010

This is a preview of "ISO 639-4:2010". [Click here to purchase the full version from the ANSI store.](#)

**PDF disclaimer**

This PDF file may contain embedded typefaces. In accordance with Adobe's licensing policy, this file may be printed or viewed but shall not be edited unless the typefaces which are embedded are licensed to and installed on the computer performing the editing. In downloading this file, parties accept therein the responsibility of not infringing Adobe's licensing policy. The ISO Central Secretariat accepts no liability in this area.

Adobe is a trademark of Adobe Systems Incorporated.

Details of the software products used to create this PDF file can be found in the General Info relative to the file; the PDF-creation parameters were optimized for printing. Every care has been taken to ensure that the file is suitable for use by ISO member bodies. In the unlikely event that a problem relating to it is found, please inform the Central Secretariat at the address given below.



**COPYRIGHT PROTECTED DOCUMENT**

© ISO 2010

All rights reserved. Unless otherwise specified, no part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and microfilm, without permission in writing from either ISO at the address below or ISO's member body in the country of the requester.

ISO copyright office  
Case postale 56 • CH-1211 Geneva 20  
Tel. + 41 22 749 01 11  
Fax + 41 22 749 09 47  
E-mail [copyright@iso.org](mailto:copyright@iso.org)  
Web [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org)

Published in Switzerland

This is a preview of "ISO 639-4:2010". [Click here to purchase the full version from the ANSI store.](#)

## Contents

Page

Foreword .....	iv
Introduction.....	v
1 Scope .....	1
2 Normative references .....	1
3 Terms and definitions .....	2
4 Fundamental concepts of language coding .....	5
4.1 Language identifiers and languages .....	5
4.2 Individual languages .....	6
4.3 Macrolanguages .....	6
4.4 Linguistic norm.....	7
4.5 Dialects .....	7
4.6 Collective language code elements and language groups .....	7
4.7 Extinct, ancient and historic languages.....	8
4.8 Artificial languages .....	8
4.9 Writing systems and scripts.....	8
5 Relationship between the parts of ISO 639.....	8
5.1 Parts of ISO 639 .....	8
5.2 ISO 639 as one code space .....	8
5.3 Principles.....	9
5.4 Common maintenance and language coding database .....	9
6 Implementation issues.....	9
6.1 Applications .....	9
6.2 Subsets of the code table .....	10
6.3 Language groups .....	10
7 Combining language identifiers with other standards and codes .....	11
7.1 Combining ISO 639 with ISO 3166 .....	11
7.2 Combining ISO 639 with ISO 19111 and ISO 19112 .....	11
7.3 Combining ISO 639 with ISO 15924 .....	12
7.4 Other code combinations .....	12
7.5 Formats of combined identifiers.....	12
8 Language description format (LDF) .....	13
8.1 Compatibilities between the ISO 639 model and ISO 12620 .....	13
8.1.1 General .....	13
8.1.2 Identification .....	15
8.1.3 Description of an ISO 639 language identifier.....	16
8.2 Extensions to ISO 12620 for ISO 639 LDF.....	20
8.2.1 Representation .....	20
8.2.2 Documentation .....	21
8.3 Language information.....	23
Annex A (informative) Overall steering of ISO 639.....	26
Bibliography.....	28

## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 639-4 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 37, *Terminology and other language and content resources*, Subcommittee SC 2, *Terminographical and lexicographical working methods*.

ISO 639 consists of the following parts, under the general title *Codes for the representation of names of languages*:

- *Part 1: Alpha-2 code*
- *Part 2: Alpha-3 code*
- *Part 3: Alpha-3 code for comprehensive coverage of languages*
- *Part 4: General principles of coding of the representation of names of languages and related entities, and application guidelines*
- *Part 5: Alpha-3 code for language families and groups*
- *Part 6: Alpha-4 code for comprehensive coverage of language variants*

This is a preview of "ISO 639-4:2010". [Click here to purchase the full version from the ANSI store.](#)

## Introduction

ISO 639 provides codes for the identification and specification of individual languages, language variants, and language groups. The identifiers may be used in a variety of applications, including specification of the language used in a text, the language of terms or words in a dictionary or terminological database, the language used in a spoken presentation, language proficiency, language capabilities of software, localization, etc. The various parts of ISO 639 are expected to be implemented in a number of environments.

Parts 1, 2, 3, and 5 of ISO 639 all contain some information about implementation issues. However, it is deemed necessary to expand those descriptions, and to have the implementation rules in a separate document. In future revisions of the other parts of ISO 639, it is expected that those standards will reference this part of ISO 639 rather than duplicating the information.